

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WEEKLY BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH
COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR MARVIN HILL, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE
IRAQ

MODERATOR: CAPTAIN BART BUECHNER, OSD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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SGT. MAJ. HILL: Sergeant Major.

CAPT. BUECHNER Good morning, Sergeant Major, this is Captain Bart Buechner calling from OSD Public Affairs and we welcome you to the Bloggers Roundtable.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Thank you.

CAPT. BUECHNER Thanks for joining us. Just to let you know we've got two media on the line with us at this point, if others come in, I'll ask them to identify themselves. We have Mr. Grim (sp), from Flashpot (sp), and also we got Andrew Lubin from ON Point.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Okay.

CAPT. BUECHNER And a couple of our staff are on-board as well. So we're basically right on time, if you have an opening remark -- if you'd like to go ahead and do that. Begin with pretty much building your background -- that you're presently serving as command sergeant major of Multinational Forces Iraq, having been in the assignment since May 5th, 2007. And we did go over some of your -- it looks like you've had some interesting assignments, I think a number of hot spots.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir, and I really don't have any opening remarks right now, so I will defer that and we can move on with it. I will tell you I really don't understand the Bloggers Roundtable, but I'm excited about it. You know, I'm up for anything that's new, you know, as long as it don't kill me.

CAPT. BUECHNER Well, good. And so far these have been very, very productive discussions.

Again, the folks that are on-board, we call this a Bloggers Roundtable but there are -- this is a new way that we're using -- we're working with folks that are serious journalists that are focused on specific issues and this gives them an opportunity to interact directly with you and other folks that are in-theatre and that are working in some of the specialized areas that we're involved with in the global war on terror. So that's -- you know, the purpose of the Roundtable is basically to have direct-connection discussions. And again, feel very encouraged and welcome to be as direct as you can with your perspective on what's going on in the part of the world that you're engaged in.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Okay. I am ready.

CAPT. BUECHNER Okay, Mr. Grimm, do you have a -- welcome to the Bloggers Roundtable, this is Captain Bart Buechner with OSD Public Affairs. Could we please identify as you join us.

CALLER: (No response.)

CAPT. BUECHNER I think we have one new person on the line.

STAFF: Or somebody got off.

CAPT. BUECHNER Maybe somebody jumped off.

STAFF: -- Mr. Grim, go ahead.

CAPT. BUECHNER Okay, go ahead Grim.

Q Good morning, Sergeant Major. I wanted to ask you a question about training. I noticed you were a drill instructor at one point.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir.

Q My father was a drill instructor in the U.S. Army. I've noticed that the U.S. Army has switched its hand-to-hand techniques to Brazilian Jujitsu in order to reduce training injuries. I was also noticing the Marine Corps martial arts program is now playing up sort of non-lethal tactics, which is different from how I had known it in the past.

I was wondering if you could talk a bit about how these new less-lethal hand-to-hand techniques are working out in the field, whether they're -- what the advantages and disadvantages might be to the new way of going about teaching these things.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, I can't really say that I can recall an instance where -- at least during my watch and probably, you know, months leading up to my watch -- that a service member had been required to use combatives. So their hand-to-hand training, I mean, it is -- it is there if needed.

I think the biggest benefit that we get out of it right now is that it is definitely a confidence-builder in our young service members, you know, when they first enter the service. (Audio difficulty) -- that it's taken up to a new level when they hit their deployable unit -- it's taken up a notch and taken up to a new level. And the intent is more than, at that point, more than a confidence-builder, it is actually another weapon that they have at their disposal. But I can't say right now where I can recall anyone being required to use it. And so I can't say where a shift in focus or a shift in training techniques has either helped or hindered at this point.

Q So then the reduction in injuries would be the primary effect?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Right. And I would think that that is a -- that is a good call. You know, we have, you know -- and I don't have the number off the top of my head, but, you know, a unit that conducts combative training, they kind of go into the training knowing that they're going to have some soldiers injured -- and, you know, hopefully not seriously injured, but someone that's going to probably miss some training hours within the next, you know, few days because of sprain, pulls or things like that.

And that comes from, you know, it comes from a number of things, but mostly from just working something that you haven't worked in a while, or not learning how to fall, because we've got to teach you how to fall before you start doing flips and kicks. So yes there is a concern about the loss of training time due to injuries sustained doing combative training.

Q All right. Well, thank you.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Thank you.

Q Sergeant Major, this is Andrew Lubin from ON Point. Appreciate you taking the time with us this afternoon, sir.

In the surge, in the last five or six months, we've been sending over one brigade at a time. Why the delay? I mean, it's like we're advertising what we're going to do. And part two of that question is what special training are we giving these troops -- if they've spent a deployment or two or three already in Iraq, why do they need special training to be (spun up ?) to be brought back again?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, I will give you my perspective of the delay. And it's not really about delaying it, it's a couple of things involved. One, is the means to get us over here -- or the means to get that brigade combat team from Fort Stewart, Georgia to Kuwait to Iraq. You know, the transportation means to do that -- the lift and all of that that is associated with it, which is more than what we expected back in December, or the announcement of a surge. So that's one thing.

And the other thing is to -- is an attempt to give that unit on the ground just a little bit more "dwell" time, if you will -- that's what we, you know, the term we use, so just a little bit more time in the States, at home, with family than what bringing them over immediately would have allowed. That's another consideration.

Another consideration is the training requirement. And you asked what could -- what's so special that they're doing, or that's requiring training, since they rotated over here a couple of times before. And my take on that, sir, is the flag has rotated over here a couple times before. But that's one -- that the known. That's guaranteed. You know, the flag has been here before. But key leaders, junior leaders, mid-grade NCOs, and young troops -- if you look at it, there's probably a lot of new faces in the organization, and there's just some requirement training that has to --

Q But sir, the -- a couple -- but sir, a couple of weeks ago, military.com and the other papers were reporting that -- (Grim ?), you might know the figures as well, better than I do -- I think it's 45 percent of the Army has not been to Iraq.

That article is that the same kids are going over and over again.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: (Cross talk.)

CAPT. BUECHNER: And I appreciate the -- (inaudible) -- rotate. I mean, my son did two (pumps ?) under different commands. You know, you know what you're doing, you know what you're doing. It's -- shouldn't -- who your commander is shouldn't make a difference.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, that is a good counterpoint -- is that that is -- that number is probably about right, that a good piece of our Army has not deployed. If you look at the number of soldiers that have deployed multiple times and you would probably average out to everybody in the Army has deployed one and a half times. (Laughter.)

Q But they haven't --

SGT. MAJ. HILL: (Cross talk.)

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: But you're absolutely right. Yeah, and you know, and -- I guess the other thing is that the -- sir, I'm going -- just going to use an analogy and -- you know, and I might be a little bit off, but -- (Cross talk.)

Q But -- and we're not challenging, sir -- (Cross talk.)

SGT. MAJ. HILL: -- I mean, just because I want-- you know, and this not a debate. I'm just attempting to answer your question with an analogy. But just because I won the Super Bowl last year doesn't mean that come spring training, I'm not going to get out there and -- you know, and practice, nor I'm not going to play the season hard because I'm the Super Bowl champs and I won last year. (Cross talk) -- get ready for the next season.

Q Okay. Okay, appreciate the point taken.

MR.

: Okay, yes.

MR.

: (Grim ?) back --

MR.

: Okay.

MR.

: (Grim ?), back to you.

Q To look at your -- at the earlier days of deployment you had in Iraq yourself with 101st and whatever, would you like to give a characterization of how the fight in Iraq has changed from when you were first there to where you are in your current position?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, yes, sir. I would say the biggest thing that I see different is that in 2003 and early 2004, I didn't have anyone that I was partnered with, trying to fight. You know, it was the 101st or other coalition forces fight and that was it. And now we have partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces that we have helped, stood up and trained. And they're taking a lot of the battle space -- you know, for us, which is a good thing.

So that's the biggest difference that I see, is that now we are partnered with someone -- someone who has a vested interest in the Baghdad Security Plan working, and just the -- you know, our fight and our cause over here actually working. That is the biggest thing that I've seen. I guess not the biggest. I guess the biggest thing I've seen also is the step up in improvised explosive devices -- the IED. The IED fight is a much greater fight than it was in 2003, early 2004. So it has evolved into be the thing, and it's the thing that just keeps me up at night trying to figure it out and trying to use every resource that we have to combat this thing. So that's the difference right now that I see.

Q All right. Thank you.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes.

Q : Okay. God, I just went brain-dead on this. This is a -- Grimm (ph), could you jump in again?

Q : Yeah.

I would like to note -- if you're going to talk about the new partners we have in the ISF -- the security forces. I'd like you to characterize -- one of the things we often hear is that they're not always reliable, particularly the Iraqi police elements that you guys work with. I'd like to hear if you can talk about that, whether that's improving, getting better, something that -- you know, you're more comfortable relying on or not.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yeah.

Well, I would tell you I don't -- that, it is -- you know, if you asked me who I really rely on, I rely on my buddy to my left and right. And eventually, I'll be able to rely more heavily on the Iraqi security forces. But, you know, in their defense, they just -- they have some issues that -- real-world issues that we don't have to deal with. You know, a police in the United States -- if he's going after someone, they go after him and

they get him and for the most part, they're not worried about their family not being home when they get there -- when they get home.

And is this a major concern for them here. It's just that they are constantly under threat and they're trying to cure a local population and have law and order. But they are constantly under threat themselves. So that piece of it is -- right now it's an obstacle and it's up to us and them, but -- you know, it's up to us to -- you know, part of providing security is to eliminate those types of obstacles as well. You know, going after the bad guys just -- that's really trying to hinder them from doing their business. Guys that want this plan to fail. I don't think that they're an unprofessional force. I think they're very professional. I think they're very proud, and I think over time they will become more capable. But it's not a matter of will. It's just a matter of -- they constantly fight in fear, and the fear is not of their life, it's -- but it's the fear of their -- the life of their family.

Q I appreciate that. We often do hear negative things in the press, and we aren't always on the other side of it. So I appreciate your taking some time to speak to that.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir.

Q In today's Wall Street Journal, which is a pretty pro- military paper and from things I've heard when I was over there in October and in the wintertime, it seems there's not enough consequences to being an insurgent. And by that I mean I was with a Marine MiTTs team in Fallujah a couple of times, and they were complaining that they saw an Iraqi digging in an IED in the side of the road -- or in the middle of the road. They couldn't shoot him. They had to arrest him. And with that, then the guy gets put in prison, released within a week -- two weeks, he's back on the street again. Again, with the idea of no consequences, there's no reason not to dig an IED because you don't get hurt on it. In the article in the Journal this morning -- it's written by former Marine officer Bing West, who spent a lot of time over there with his son, who did two tours over there.

They said that in Vietnam, for example, you had for every encounter, we killed one out of 13 Vietnamese. In Iraq, we're arresting one out of 10. And he went on -- basically, the inference is that, again, not enough consequences. Are the ROEs changed where we're not allowed to defend ourselves? I mean, again, one would think digging an IED is a pretty offensive action. And could you comment on that?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Ooh, that's a tough one to comment on, sir, and I'm not even going to evade that one. But, you know, the ROE is -- you know what it is.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: It's rules that separate us from them.

Q But sir, it seems like the ROEs are run by the command -- they're not standard ROEs. You know, a guy who's a Reserve lieutenant colonel may have his take versus a guy who's active service -- they have a different take. How does the enlisted man on the ground deal with conflicting interpretations of ROEs?

And I don't even want to discuss the Marines in Haditha. Then we'll be on for hours.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Sir, that is a tough one, and we understand that understanding the ROE is a must. And when you understand the ROE, there is no hesitation in the fighter or the firer or the shooter -- there's no hesitation. You eliminate that when you have a clear understanding of the ROE. I will take that as feedback, sir, and we will get some people to working on or, again, verifying the -- sir?

Q I was going to say, Captain, this is in today's Wall Street Journal. So perhaps, you know, you get a chance to look at the article and e-mail us. And truly, I'd love to follow up in a positive sense. I'd love to follow up and get your response to the article about it. Because -- (inaudible) -- they're on our side of the fence on this one.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir. And sir, I'll tell you, I am not a hard guy to find --

Q I appreciate that.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: -- as far as e-mail or anything like that. And I will take that, and I won't take it as a challenge, I'll just take it as -- I would like to see that article, and I would like to find out what's on our soldiers' minds as it pertains to the ROE. Because if there is a lack of understanding of it or it's ambiguous or it doesn't allow full protection, that is something we go back after.

Q Okay, appreciate it. And sir, let me give you my -- (Grim ?), do you mind if I follow up?

Q No, go right ahead.

Q Sergeant Major, in my context in this -- again, I was in Fallujah with the MiTT team -- and I can give you chapter and verse on that -- with a Marine major who effectively was told you can't shoot a guy digging an IED -- not allowed to shoot at him. That's an -- what is the word I'm looking for -- that's an overreaction to the threat. You know, if an Iraqi points an AK at you, that you can respond to, but an IED you've got to arrest them. Again, so that's a question of -- I got a copy of the ROE card, as do you. I understand it, but if you interpret it different that me --

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Right.

Q -- if I'm the kid on the ground kicking in the door, do I shoot, do I not shoot? Because gee, this major hasn't spent time over here. He doesn't understand. That's the

kind of hesitation that gets our kids killed -- seems to be, let me put it that way. And that's kind of the context that my question is in.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir, and I would love to answer your question, but I think I won't be able to answer it for about 24-48 hours.

Q No, and sir, that's cool. Again, that's why I quoted the article and everything else. Don't want to seem like I'm sandbagging you. I would love to give you a chance to read it and ask around, and then we chat next week sometime.

CAPT BUECHNER: Command Sergeant Major, could you give us your e-mail address so we can go ahead and e-mail that article to you?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir. My e-mail address is (edited).

CAPT. BUECHNER: Got it. Okay, we'll bird dog that down and shoot you a copy of it.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: I would love that.

Q And Captain, you be our POC in this if you would?

CAPT. BUECHNER: Correct, yeah, that will be me. And you can reach me on my cell phone -- probably would be the best number today. I'm going to be moving around a little bit -- 707 --

Q Well, we'll get you through Jack. We can reach you.

CAPT. BUECHNER: That's right. You know how to get a hold of Jack.

Q Exactly.

CAPT. BUECHNER: Okay, good, good.

Q Sir, are you --

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, I --

Q Go ahead.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: No, I was saying I really appreciate that. And that's a homework assignment for me.

Q I appreciate it. (Laughs.) We got briefed on you before you got briefed with us.

Sir, when you're in the field, are you getting questions from the Marines or from the soldiers what does it take to win, what's it take to get home, what are we doing here? Are you getting kind of any generic questions like that?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I guess it was a couple of weeks ago, I was asked define winning in Iraq.

Q Oh, we're dying to ask you that, sir. We're too polite.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yeah. I was asked to define winning in Iraq.

Q Okay.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: And my definition of winning in Iraq was, one, I felt a government that was able to take care of its people and be self-sustaining, economic-generating government -- that's one. I think another -- you can define winning by improving the life of the Iraqi people and bringing some form of normalcy back into their life. Example -- if you move into an area and that area is just vacant because the people were afraid and they moved -- feared for their life -- and through your presence -- you know, over the last month or six weeks or so through your presence in that area -- that people have begun to move back into their homes, kids are playing stick ball, schools are opening. That's -- you know, that's an indicator of winning in Iraq.

So you know, I think it's the government. I think it's just the -- I'm trying to think of the term that they use -- the atmospherics, all right. And then also helping build an Iraqi security force -- build and train and equip an Iraqi security force that's capable of providing security for its people. And if you're playing a role in that and if you can see progress in that, I think you can say that you are winning. But through your efforts, if you don't see a change in the atmospherics, if you see the government moving so slow that it appears that they're going backwards, and if you see an Iraqi security force that exists just to exist and not exist to take care of its people, protect its people, then we are not winning.

I don't think it's about what we do for ourselves while we're over here. I don't think it's about how many hours an aviation unit has flown or how many missions an infantry unit has done and how much fuel a petroleum unit has pumped. It's about what - - those things that we've done, how that relates to securing and taking care of the Iraqi people. Long answer but that's how I define winning.

Q Okay, I appreciate that.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: You can't define it by the number of casualties or things like that. Yes, sir.

Q (Grim ?), back to you.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: I guess the answer is back to yes, I get hit with those questions about defining winning and are we winning.

Q That's a pretty easy and pretty understandable answer. When you're talking to the -- I hate to call them, because that denigrates them -- mainstream media, do they even ask you that?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: No, no. They don't. They'll ask me how the troops are dealing with casualties. They'll ask me, you know, some of those types of things.

Q Okay.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: But you know, and our message to the units and to the many servicemembers over here, I try to prepare them to go back home and sit in the bar, right, and talk to someone.

And -- you know, they're at an airport. They sit in the bar and someone asks them, "Are you coming back from Iraq?" They go, "Yes." And they say, "What did you do over there?"

Q Or "Why are you going?"

SGT. MAJ. HILL: I -- yeah. and then "What did you do?" and "Why are you going?" -- can't be, "Well, I'm going over there to fix Humvees." Well, you can fix Humvees at Fort Hood, Texas. You know -- "Well, I'm a mail clerk and I'm going to deliver mail." Well, you can deliver mail at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Why are you going over there? And I want them to be able to tell people -- whether they be in a bar or at church, because both people -- you know can be pretty aggressive.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: And to be able to tell them why you were over there and what your job did in the overall mission because that's what they understand. They don't understand "I pumped more fuel than the unit before me." They understand -- you know, "My being over there pumping fuel enabled the Bradleys to be able to roll on time." To enable -- they were part of the security belt for Baghdad. You know, that piece they understand.

Q Appreciate it. That is excellent. Thank you, sir.

Q Yeah, and -- but I mean, this is pretty understandable. I'm just amazed that this is not picked up by others because this pretty cut-and-dried and pretty common sense.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes. And -- you know, and the thing about it -- I think for the most part, sir, from the soldier perspective -- probably from some of our leaders, I think

we just speak in a language that the American people don't understand. You know, if you were a former soldier or -- you know, a service member, you understand, "Okay, I flew more flight hours than such-and-such." Okay? They're saying that's pretty good but still, that's whoop-de-do, you know. Well, what did the flight hours or what did the flight hours enable. And once we can say that, then people say, "Oh, I get it."

Q Okay.

Q This is excellent. Appreciate that.

(Grim ?), yours.

Q Yes, sorry for another question, Sergeant Major. I'd like to ask you about the enlistment of information operations -- what you guys are doing out there outside the wire. We often ask at these roundtables about IO, but we often get kind of high-level answers from, you know, generals and colonels and what-not. I'd like, kind of -- what are people doing -- you know, patrols that are going out. Talk a little bit about, if you would, how that's going in Iraq right now.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, sir, as far as the information operation from the enlisted perspective -- I mean, we look at -- I talked earlier about the -- you know, strategic corporal. I think was talking to you all about it. You know, and this is a -- I call the strategic corporal -- is a young service member, you know -- maybe mid-grade or junior grade who's out there on point, whose actions that would have strategic implications, whether it be positive or negative, all right? But they're at the spear -- they're at the point of the spear strategically, and -- you know, just -- and making sure that they are carrying the message. And the message is, you know, what they are there to do and making sure that the engagement process is not one of -- you know, "Don't use the wrong weapon at the wrong time. Do not use a hand grenade when you should be using a handshake. And do not use a handshake -- should be using a hand grenade."

So it's -- what we try to do with these young warriors is make sure that they -- one, they can communicate with the people that -- of Iraq that are engaging every day -- their intent to secure them and their intent to try to make life better for them each day. And they can tell them that. They can tell them that through flyers, they can tell them that through interpreters or they can tell them that through action. And the action piece is -- of it is working, you know? And that is -- you know, assisting in cleaning up neighborhoods, assisting in getting schools open, assisting in getting playgrounds built, assisting in securing the market areas and just letting them know that, you know, we are doing this because -- you know, you just can't do business without advertising.

Q If you guys pick up rumors, for example -- some of the -- I'm sure you know, but all those kind of crazy rumors that are always going around in the war zone on the population -- if you guys pick up information like that, you find that -- if you happen to know it's false, is there an effort to get back to the family you picked it up from with -- you know, an answer kind of tell them on an individual level, "This is what -- you know,

is really going on. This is what we think that -- this is where we think that rumor's coming from and this is why it's not true"?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Exactly. And then at a larger level, as things come out in -- oh, maybe -- (inaudible) -- media on a larger scale, you know, to make sure that we have a rebuttal and go on record with rebuttal, and not only just say -- not just enough to say, "That's not true," but to come back with -- you know, "What really is true is this." So -- and we do that at the troop level as well. You're absolutely right.

Q Thank you.

Q For -- sir, following up on that, when I've been in CPIC we have a bunch of great people here, men and women, nobody speaks Arabic. How do we do a good job or do we do a good job confirming and denying rumors in the gossip that posts to the Arab world when we've got guys who -- we have nobody there who can speak to them in their language? That's kind of an ineffective IO campaign, isn't it? And if you're calling from CPIC -- "Hey, guys" -- Major Hernandez, I apologize.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Sir, I guess I can't agree or disagree on that one. (Laughter.) But I would imagine the lack of speaking Arabic is definitely -- I guess, a pitfall in effective communication, that's for sure.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: In this part of the world, yes sir.

Q Quick -- (Grim ?) -- do you mind if I go on? I've got one more. I guess he's not on.

Q Go right ahead.

Q Thanks. Okay, the Marines have an Iraqi training program out in California called Mojave Viper outside of Twentynine Palms where they bring in Iraq -- bring in Arabs and they stage, you know, mock War Games and mock casualties and everything else. Does the Army have a similar program?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes sir. And it may not be centralized as with the Marines. You know, in my previous life before I became the command sergeant major over here for Multinational Force Iraq, I was the command sergeant major for First Army --

Q Okay.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: -- and I had a commander by the name of General Honore'. And we were responsible for the post mobilization training for Army Reserve and National Guard as we got them ready for the fight. And that was a big part of our -- what we call the COB -- Civilians On the Battlefield -- COB -- that was a big part of our COB

contracts, was hiring Arabic speakers, Iraqis, you know, you name it, that would help facilitate and put more realism into our training. I think that's the question you're asking.

And we didn't centralize it at one general location. I mean, our National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California -- I'm speaking Army now -- the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California has a big Civilians on the Battlefield contract that does the same thing. JRTC -- Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana -- same thing. And then, at our post-mobilization training centers -- the Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, the Fort -- I mean, the Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the Fort Dix, New Jersey -- all over the place where we were training units for the fight in 1st Army. We had a big COB contract that had just that.

So I think everybody's on the -- you know, on the same sheet of music. We're just going about doing it just a little bit different. Some are decentralized while others are centralized.

Q All right. I appreciate it. Thank you.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes sir.

Q Hey, Captain, how are we fixed for time? I mean, I'll keep going if it's --

(Cross talk.)

CAPT. BUECHNER: Okay, sure. We've got -- we've got about another 15, 20 minutes.

Q Oh, great. (Grim ?), up to you, then.

Q All right. As I was listening to that answer, I forgot to think of another question. (Laughter.)

Q Hey, Command Sergeant Major, what we do -- (Grim ?), I'll buy you some time -- what we do here, we -- you know, as bloggers, or as we like to call to call ourselves digital media -- we're out there talking to people like yourself or, last week, we interviewed General Bergner and -- oh, just give me a -- Brigadier General Bergner and others; we had Brigadier General Holmes a couple of weeks ago -- and then through the Internet, we get the word out to interested parties, for lack of a better word.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes.

Q Our readership is, you know, families of soldiers and Marines, interested people, people who are just disgusted with the newspapers on either side and want to get some pretty rational response -- get some rational news for a change.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Okay.

Q Okay, (Grim ?), I helped you out. (Laughter.) --

Q Thank you.

You served with the 101st. Could you talk a little bit about what it means to be in a unit with the history of the 101st Airborne? I want to know, do you think that -- I suppose that it sort of wraps up into the whole kind of "beret" issue that -- (audio break) -- years ago and what it means? Does the Army have -- (audio break) -- should the Army have sort of elite or should it sort of focus more on every unit being worthy in its way?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, sir I would tell you, you know, the 101st, you know, their history -- for just a unit that's so young, comparatively, you know, they have such a -- such a rich history. And to be activated in 1942 and jumping into combat in 1944, is just incredible, you know. Now we are able to do stuff like that now. Now we are activating units and standing up brigade combat teams, you know, one year, and putting them into the fight the next year. Prior to this, it was just unheard of, you know, except for during World War II.

So, you know, serving in a unit like that, you know, it was just -- it just made me extremely proud. Eliteness? You know at the end of the day, basically, you know, we're all capable of doing kind of the same thing. I just think having, maybe -- what made them unique, really, having -- (audio break) -- more helicopters than anybody else, you know, at the time.

But I think we're building those types of units now. Maybe not the -- not the uniqueness or the eliteness, but units that soldiers are proud to serve in because they were a part of that unit when it was built. And then they went and fought with that unit, you know, and then got back and, you know, got ready to go to another fight with the unit.

I think there's some -- there are some historic pieces and custom pieces that we're beginning to lose as the Army -- as we transform and rebuild and reshape and modularize. There are some things that are very important to soldiers, and I will admit that. Things, traditions, uniform-type items and things like that that are very important to soldiers. And some of that stuff we're going to lose as we start, you know, adjusting and changing our uniform.

I don't think, you know -- I think some people just don't give it much attention as they should, in my opinion. You know, that esprit de corps in the unit is extremely important.

Q Do you think that -- you mentioned -- and it was an interesting thing you said about the -- (inaudible) -- where it comes from, it comes from having been there at the ground floor. Do you think that that -- (audio break) -- is that comparing -- does that

compare to being in a unit like the 101st, one of these, sort of, storied units that, you know, you have a pride in being part of a longer tradition? Or is it something that, you know, having been in at the ground floor, you feel that kind of, some sort of similar pride, do you think?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: You know, I think it's a matter of part of being -- it has something to do with being a part of something special. I think, you know, my serving in the 101st, I was serving because of the history that someone else wrote -- you know, the history that people before me made. And I think -- and I think now, as we're standing up some of these new organizations, they're writing their own history. They're writing it as they're making it, you know.

And so I think that's going to really be a rally -- something that soldiers will be able to rally around. It's that, you know, they built the unit. I was the -- you know, I was the 40th guy to arrive at the unit. You know, they're building units. And then we're training those units and then putting them in the fight. And I think -- I think that's going to mean a whole lot to a lot of soldiers over time. And I think soldiers will reenlist to stay in those units. You know, it's one thing to reenlist, but it's to reenlist to stay in that particular unit. And that's what I'm finding a lot too here.

We're -- we're going to do a reenlistment ceremony on the 4th of July and anyone that wants to reenlist that day can come up to headquarters and General Petraeus will reenlist them on the 4th of July. And what I've noticed of the ones that have signed up to reenlist already, they are reenlisting for certain units, you know, and some are reenlisting for units based on the patch chart -- you know, reading the tea leaves and saying, okay if I reenlist with this unit, you know, at least I'll get 18 months back before I have to come back, because six months with my current unit and then another year before that unit goes. So they're doing that kind of math, while others are reenlisting because they want to wear that patch. And it's incredible, you know, just something as simple as a patch on the shoulder, you know. It gets -- it gets folks fired up.

You know I think that's a tremendous -- you know, there's something there that is kind of intangible. But there's something there that we've just got to, you know, somebody figured it out years ago when they started putting patches on shoulders. And I'm just -- this is something that I just pray that we never let go.

CAPT. BUECHNER: Does that apply to the Reserve and the Guard units as well as the active duty, or is it a little different dynamic with them?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: I think with them, my experience has seen that the Guard -- the National Guard is a little bit more patch-conscious, because the National Guard, you know, they've got to, you know, they either wear a state patch or, you know, something like that. So, you know, there's a little bit more home-townness in them, so they're a little bit prouder to wear their unit patch, because everybody in the state recognizes that.

And then my experience has been the Army Reserve kind of, you know, they can relate to the patch with the most history, or the most dynamic, or the most uniqueness, you know -- 101st, 82nd, 3rd ID, 4th ID, 1st Cavalry, you know, they relate to those types of patches. And the Guard does as well but I think the Guard is a little bit more -- it takes a little bit more ownership in their own patch because everybody in the state recognizes that patch because they, for the most part, they're fighting for a home town.

Q Can I follow up on that? Do we have time?

CAPT. BUECHNER: Sure do.

Q Yes, sir -- thanks. Sergeant Major, then on that -- we were looking at the recruiting statistics that came out this week for the last month. Army was down a record percentage -- and I don't remember what it was offhand. Marines were up in an astronomical, and the Navy -- I mean, Navy and Air Force were, you know, met their missions, met their goals.

When I see the ads on television, I see -- especially during the NBA season -- Marines are showing shots of Hiroshima, shots of -- we call them "Devil Dogs," we call them "Leathernecks." You see the Army ad where the guy gets out there and says, "Yeah, my son can run faster than I can." How do -- how does recruiting place -- if you're trying to emphasis traditions which is a great idea, I don't see it in your advertising. Are there any advertising -- it's still better than "Army of One", but I don't see the emphasis on tradition and fellowship and honor that the Marines -- that you're trying to portray and trying to attract.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, you know -- you know, we got a command that stood up -- well, they've been up for a while, but, you know, that's kind of their baby. You know, working the Army, the advertising campaign and sometime they get it and sometime they don't.

You know, what they told me in the past is that -- when I bring up issues with them, they said, "It's kind of not geared toward you." You know, they said, "You don't get this because you're not supposed to get it," or "You're not our target audience." But the 19- to 23- year-old get it. Oh, okay, you know.

But, you know, I go back to the "Army of One," if I could just talk about that one a little bit. You know, I got that, you know. And personally I thought the "Army of One" was on the money. But it takes you a while to get it and that's what was happening.

Q Right.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: It -- "Army of One" wasn't making sense to dudes like me. You know, because, you know, we said, "Army of One"? You know, this is not about you; this is about the team and all of that.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: But when I finally got the "Army of One", the way I got it was that, "Hey, the Army may be a huge, complex organization full of complex systems, weaponry, policies, procedures, tactics, techniques and procedures, but you still got to deal with me. You know, it may be huge and I may have to -- you know, I may have all of these big huge weapon systems, but at the end of the day, you know, you still got to deal with me.

Q Okay.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: And I'm an army myself. So that's, you know, but it took a while for that to make it to people like me.

Q Okay.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: But to the 19-year-old that was playing on his, you know, his Xbox and listening to his iPod at the same time, he got it.

Q Okay.

Again, I spoke to the recruiting numbers that came out and the Marines keep pushing -- and it's that-- maybe the 19-year-old, the kid who you wanted -- who is -- wants to join the military maybe that's what he's looking for instead of bopping around on his iPod and getting the back of his neck to it. I don't know. I'm just throwing this out.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: You're right. And we can't underestimate those guys.

Q Yeah.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: You know, and underestimating them meaning you may not think patriotism and things like that are not that important to them -- and honor and things like that. But I would defend, just a little bit, you know, the list coming short on the recruiting mission is, you know, you know, we're trying to build or increase the n-strength of our Army as well. And in doing so we just have to -- we can increase the end-strength, you know, gradually and we can give ourselves a smaller mission, we can increase the retention mission and decrease the recruiting mission. And I guess the way we decided to do it is, you know, we got to play with the recruiting piece as well, so we up the ante more than what we normally would -- upped the ante on the recruiting mission.

Q Look, I'm 50-plus, I look at things different than the young kids so --

SGT. MAJ. HILL: (Laughs.) Yes, sir.

But, sir, I mean, my clock is ticking on this end. And I got something pressing on the other end so --

CAPT. BUECHNER: Yes, sir, we're just --

SGT. MAJ. HILL: I've got one more -- I think we're just wrapping now aren't we?

Q Okay.

CAPT. BUECHNER: Yeah, this is -- time for one more question, then we'll go ahead and do the wrap up.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Yes, sir.

Q All right. Well, I'll just ask the one more question then.

You're talking about the reenlistment ceremony that you're going to be doing on the 4th of July -- the reenlistment ceremony to retake to oath of enlistment. And I wonder if you could talk about, you know, do you feel like the oath of the enlistment only lasts through the term? Do you think it -- it doesn't, I mean, the oath doesn't itself have a time limit implied in it? Can you talk about, you know, why you re-give it? Why you -- how you feel when you do it and, you know, when you retake the oath?

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, sir, I would tell you me as a person -- anytime I'm around a reenlistment ceremony, personally, I raise my hand and I recite the oath along with them. I reaffirm my oath and remind myself why I serve. And so it's just, you know, it just gives you a feeling of being something much, much larger than yourself.

But on that, General, as I'm reciting that oath and as I get to the part of saying "I will obey the orders of the president and the orders of the officers appointed over me," to blindly do that -- and I think that's any service member because we all take that same oath -- to blindly do that, we have to know that our leaders have our best interests at heart, all right.

And as I take that oath, I just remind myself that I trust my leaders that they have my best interest at heart. And I think that serves as a reminder to our young service members that we're enlisting, it serves as a reminder that, hey, as a leader I've got your back and I got your best interest at heart because I need you to blindly obey my orders -- you know, I don't need you to question them. And so in order for you to do that, you've got to know that I've got your back.

And I think it's -- you know, it's only a few words, but I think it's very, very powerful. And I think it's just symbolic. So can you reenlist? You know, I think it's just a signing of papers -- a signing of sheet of paper saying, hey, I commit myself to three

more years -- it's done -- but the raising of the hand and swearing in -- that ceremonial piece of it serves as a reminder.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you, sir.

CAPT. BUECHNER: Thank you, Command Sergeant Major. Some great comments and God bless you and wish you the best.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: Well, thank you very much. I just appreciate all of you all out there who have an interest in what's going on over here. Not just from a political perspective but as care for America's young men and women's perspective. So thanks a lot for caring for our soldier's sake and --

(Cross talk.)

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for the time. We do appreciate this.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: All right.

CAPT. BUECHNER: This will be available on DOD clips later on and you know the usual things. We'll also have a story based on this written up for American Forces Press Service. And we should have that posted later on, hopefully today at the DODDefenseLink.mil website.

Q Good.

CAPT. BUECHNER: So thanks again to everybody for participating and we'll -- good luck with your reenlistment ceremony.

SGT. MAJ. HILL: All right. Thank you, sir.

Q Yes, sir. Get some pictures, we'll publish them.

Sir, thank you again -- appreciate it.

And, Captain, thank you.

CAPT. BUECHNER: Okay.

Q Bye.

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